



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
March 4, 2006

President Bush and President Musharraf of Pakistan Discuss Strengthened Relationship

Aiwan-e-Sadr
Islamabad, Pakistan

 [Fact Sheet: United States and Pakistan: Long-Term Strategic Partners](#)

 [President's Visit to India and Pakistan](#)

 [In Focus: Global Diplomacy](#)



12:45 P.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF: With your permission, Mr. President -- Ladies and gentlemen, it's indeed a great day, it's our honor, it's a proud privilege for Pakistan to receive President Bush, Mrs. Laura Bush, the First Lady, and such a large delegation from the United States. We are extremely glad that this has happened and the President is in our midst.

In our discussions, first of all, I expressed Pakistan's deepest regrets on the very sad incident of the killing of a United States diplomat in Karachi. We know that it has been timed very viciously to vitiate the atmosphere during the President's visit, but I'm very glad and I'm extremely grateful to the President for showing understanding and showing also the resolve not to let such terrorist acts interfere in the normal process of our strategic cooperation.



I also expressed Pakistan's gratitude to the President for the assistance that we got in the relief operations and the reconstruction activity of the earthquake in our hour of need. I don't think without the assistance of the Chinooks of United States and the medical teams, the hospitals, that we could have met the challenges of the relief operation in the earthquake. And we look forward to increased involvement -- or sustained involvement of United States in assisting us in the reconstruction activity. So our extreme gratitude to United States.

Ladies and gentlemen, Pakistan and United States have always had a strategic partnership, a strategic relationship all along. Today, with my interaction with the President, we have revived and maybe

further strengthened this relationship. We have laid the foundations of a very strong, sustainable, broad-based and a long-term relationship between Pakistan and United States. And this relationship includes, first of all, commencing our United States-Pakistan strategic dialogue in an institutional manner, creating an institutional methodology of doing that, and talking of -- within this, talking of trade and investment, talking of defense relationships, cooperation in education, and above all, cooperation in our fight against terrorism and extremism.

I did express my gratitude to the President also for his efforts towards resolution of disputes in the region, to bring peace into the region, and a special reference to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute. I did request the President to remain involved in facilitating a resolution of all disputes, including, obviously, the Kashmir dispute.

Last of all, I did touch on the very thorny issue of the act, blasphemous act against our Prophet, peace be upon him. I did express the concerns of the Muslim world, in general, who condemn such acts and who reject the issue of justifying these acts in the name of freedom of press. May I say that the President did show concern, and I'm extremely grateful to him for showing concern toward the sentiments of the Muslim world.

In the end, I would like to say that, again, that I look forward to an era of cooperation, of strategic relationships with you, with United States. And may I add on a personal note, I look forward to sustaining this great friendship that I have developed with you, personally, Mr. President. Thank you very much again for coming to Pakistan and doing us this honor of hosting. Thank you very much.



PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, thank you. Laura and I are really glad to be here, and we want to thank you and Ms. Musharraf for your hospitality. We do have a good friendship. It was displayed last night when I got off Air Force One and your daughter was there to greet us. And that was a really kind gesture, and I thank you very much for that. I particularly thank your daughter for coming out.

We've had a -- we're going to have a full day. We've just had a lengthy one-on-one discussion about common interests. Then we invited members of our government in to continue our discussion. I'll talk a little bit about the earthquake relief -- I mean, the -- yes, the earthquake relief in a minute, but I am looking forward to the meeting with a cross-section of Pakistani society, which will take place later on today, and I'm particularly interested in cricket. I understand you've lined up a little cricket exhibition for us, and maybe I'll take the bat, I don't know. We'll see. (Laughter.) I'm kind of getting old these days.

Mr. President and I reaffirmed our shared commitment to a broad and lasting strategic partnership. And that partnership begins with close cooperation in the war on terror. President Musharraf made a bold decision for his people and for peace, after September the 11th, when Pakistan chose to fight the

terrorists. The American people appreciate your leadership, Mr. President, and so do I.

Pakistan has captured or killed hundreds of al Qaeda terrorists. Pakistan has lost brave citizens in this fight. We're grateful to all who have given their lives in this vital cause. We honor the Pakistanis who continue to risk their lives to confront the terrorists. This week's bombing in Karachi shows again the war on terror goes on. America mourns the loss of all killed in the attack. We send our condolences to the family of David Foy, and we send our condolences, as well, to the families of the Pakistanis who lost their lives. We're not going to back down in the face of these killers. We'll fight this war and we will win this war together.

Pakistan is an important partner in fighting proliferation. Pakistan agreed to join the Container Security Initiative, an international effort to stop the spread of dangerous material shipments. And I thank you for that, Mr. President. We'll continue to work together to ensure that the world's most dangerous weapons do not end up in the hands of the terrorists.

We support democracy in Pakistan. President Musharraf understands that in the long run, the way to defeat terrorists is to replace an ideology of hatred with an ideology of hope. And I thank you for your extensive briefing today on your plans to spread freedom throughout your country. President Musharraf envisions a modern state that provides an alternative to radicalism.



The elections scheduled for 2007 are a great opportunity for Pakistan. The President understands these elections need to be open and honest. America will continue to working -- working with Pakistan to lay the foundations of democracy. And I appreciate your commitment.

Pakistan and India now have an historic opportunity to work toward lasting peace. President Musharraf and Prime Minister Singh have shown themselves to be leaders of courage and vision. I was reflecting with the President how much the atmosphere has changed since I first became inaugurated as President. You think back to 2001 and 2002, there was a lot of tension, a lot of concern. And yet the President has stood up and led the process toward better understanding, better exchanges with India. I encourage all sides to continue to make progress on important issues, including Kashmir.

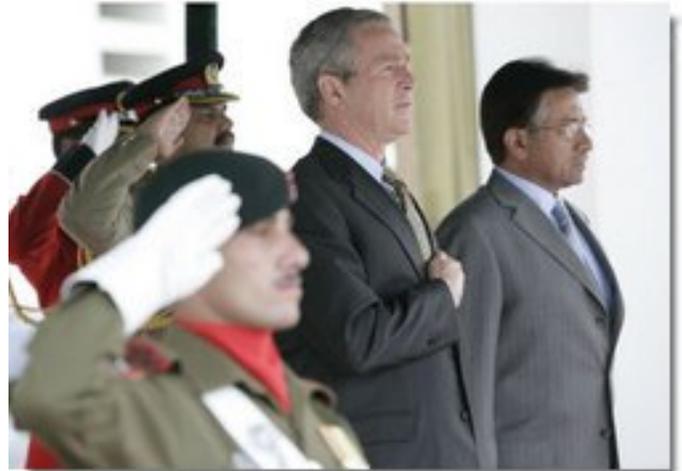
We're proud to help our Pakistani friends recover from the devastation of the earthquake. We just saw a film of the earthquake. It is staggering what the people of this country have been through. It is unbelievable how many people lost their lives, how many people have lost their homes. And we're proud to help. We're proud to help a great Pakistan military take the lead. We're proud to stand with the NGOs and those who deliver compassion as this country rebuilds. We stand by our commitment, our pledge of one-half billion dollars for recovery and reconstruction.

We're cooperating to strengthen our economies. I congratulate the government on strong economic growth. We are in the process of working on a bilateral investment treaty that will encourage foreign

investment and more opportunity for the people of Pakistan. We strongly support the President's vision of a reconstruction opportunity zone in remote areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This vision means that products manufactured in those zones will be eligible for duty-free entry into the United States. So we're working to create such zones.

Our idea is to continue to work with our strong friend and ally, work to keep the peace, to win the war on terror, to help the spread of democracy and freedom, and to encourage vital economic development.

Finally, we look forward to continuing to work with the President on his vision to make sure that education is spread throughout this country, particularly for young girls. President Musharraf briefed us on his education plans today, and they're farsighted and they're visionary. The United States looks forward to helping you, sir, implement that vision.



All in all, it's an honor to be here. Thanks for your hospitality. I'm looking forward to taking some questions.

Q Thank you, President Musharraf.

President Bush, in your address to the Asia Society you talked about a strategic partnership with Pakistan, as did President Musharraf just now. And, of course, you just mentioned the bilateral investment treaty. Could you list some possible tangible milestones in forging this relationship and taking it forward? And also, on Kashmir, what are your perceptions on how this can be resolved, given that you've met both the leaders of Pakistan and India now? Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: The best way for Kashmir to be resolved is for leaders of both countries to step up and lead. And that's exactly what President Musharraf has done, and that's what Prime Minister Singh has assured me he wants to do, and that is to resolve this situation.

Obviously, there needs to be some confidence in order for the countries to go forward, and therefore, the confidence-building measures that the governments have taken is beginning to bear fruits, in my judgment -- increased trade, increased transportation. I thought it was interesting that the Indians sent supplies immediately upon the devastating natural disaster. In other words, things are -- the atmosphere is changing.

However, in order for a deal to get done, it requires commitment at the leadership level. And in my perspective, I've seen the commitment, and the role of the United States is to continue to encourage the parties to come together.

The first part of the question was tangible evidence. Well, part of the tangible evidence of our relationship is the half-a-billion-dollars commitment to help this country rebuild; it's the \$66 million last

year to help implement the President's education initiative; it is the idea of developing reconstruction zones -- I mean trade zones in remote areas so that goods manufactured in those zones can get duty-free access to the United States, on the theory that economic vitality and economic prosperity for people in the remote regions of Pakistan will help defeat the terrorists and their hateful ideology.

Sam Bodman is coming, our Secretary of Energy, to work with Pakistan on Pakistan's energy needs. There's a variety of things we can continue to cooperate on. Perhaps the most important one of all is to defeat these terrorists, some of whom are lodged here in Pakistan, some of whom have tried to kill your President. And close cooperation is needed to defeat them.

Terry Hunt.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, what would you like to see President Musharraf do in the war on terrorism that he's not doing now? Is the United States getting the access and the help that it needs to go after al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden?

PRESIDENT BUSH: There's a lot of work to be done in defeating al Qaeda. The President and I know that. We spent a good while this morning talking about the work that needs to be done. The best way to defeat al Qaeda is to find -- is to share good intelligence to locate them, and then to be prepared to bring them to justice. So, one, the first question that I always ask is whether or not our intelligence-sharing is good enough, and we're working on it to make sure it's good enough. Intelligence is gathered by -- in a lot of different ways, but the key thing is that, one, it be actionable, and two, it be shared on a real-time basis.

Secondly, in order for Pakistan to defend herself from al Qaeda, she must have equipment necessary to move quickly, without tipping off the enemy. The President is training up special forces teams to do just that. And so while we do have a lot of work to be done, it's important that we stay on the hunt. Part of my mission today was to determine whether or not the President is as committed as he has been in the past to bringing these terrorists to justice, and he is. He understands the stakes; he understands the responsibility; and he understands the need to make sure our strategy is able to defeat the enemy.

Do you want to say something to that?

PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF: May I add to this, with your permission? The first element that one needs to be very clear is the intentions. And it's very clear that the intentions of Pakistan and my intentions are absolutely clear that we are a very strong -- we have a strong partnership on the issue of fighting terrorism. So the intentions should be very clear.

Then we need to strategize. We have strategized. We have strategized how to deal with terrorism, and then strategized also on how to deal with extremism, which is very different from terrorism. So we have strategized both. Then we need to come forward to the implementation part. Now, the implementation has to be strong also, with all the resolve. We are doing that also. So if at all there are slippages, it is possible in the implementation part. But as long as the intention is clear, the resolve is there, and the strategy is clear, we are moving forward toward to delivering, and we will succeed. That is all.

Q My question is to President Bush. President Bush, you talked about a strategic relationship with Pakistan. You also talked about helping Pakistan economically, and you just mentioned that the Energy Secretary is going to be visiting Pakistan. So Pakistan has some general energy needs, and in that respect, the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline seems to have hit some problems because of the opposition from the United States. So what are some specific options that you have to address Pakistan's energy concerns? And are you working on offering Pakistan a civilian nuclear deal? Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: As I mentioned, Secretary of Energy Sam Bodman will be here to work with the Pakistan government. Our beef with Iran is not the pipeline; our beef with Iran is the fact that they want to develop a nuclear weapon. And I believe a nuclear weapon in the hands of the Iranians would be very dangerous for all of us. It would endanger world peace. So we're working very hard to convince the Iranians to get rid of their nuclear ambitions.

As to the civilian nuclear program, first of all, I understand -- the President brought this issue up with me -- that Pakistan has got energy needs because of a growing economy. And he explained to me the natural gas situation here in the country. We understand you need to get natural gas in the region, and that's fine.

Secondly, we discussed a civilian nuclear program, and I explained that Pakistan and India are different countries with different needs and different histories. So, as we proceed forward, our strategy will take in effect those well-known differences.

Toby.

Q Mr. President --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Which one?

Q Both of you can address this. Some critics --

PRESIDENT BUSH: -- to your question. (Laughter.)

Q Some critics say that Pakistan is not moving quickly enough on democratic reforms. And moves towards democracy has been one of the hallmarks of your administration. How do you respond to critics who say you are holding back on pressing President Musharraf on moves toward democracy because of its help in the war on terrorism? And I would also ask --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, we discussed -- we spent a lot of time talking about democracy in Pakistan, and I believe democracy is Pakistan's future. And we share a strong commitment to democracy. I just mentioned in my opening address the idea of making sure the elections go forward in 2007, and I discussed that with the President. President Musharraf has made clear that he intends to hold elections -- I'll let him speak for himself on this issue, but democracy has been definitely a part of our agenda here, as it should be.

Secondly, one of the things that the President is constantly talking about is the ways to defeat extremism. We're talking about making sure that we work closely to bring the terrorists to justice, but in the long run he understands that extremism can be defeated by freedom and democracy and prosperity and better education. And we spent a lot of time strategizing on that subject today.

I'll let you speak for yourself on the subject, though, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF: Unfortunately, we are accused a lot on not moving forward on democracy. But as I understand democracy, we are a -- may I venture to tell you what we've done in line with democracy to introduce sustainable democracy in Pakistan. The first ingredient of democracy, I believe, is the empowerment of the people. We have empowered the people of Pakistan now -- they were never empowered before -- by introducing a local government system where we have given the destiny of their areas for development, for welfare, for progress in their own hands through financial, political and administrative involvement.

Also democracy also means empowerment of women. It is the first time that we have empowered the women of Pakistan, by giving them a say in the political milieu of Pakistan. Today there are over 30,000 women in the political hierarchy of Pakistan. We have empowered the minorities of Pakistan for the first time. They have got a joint election system, where previously they had a separate election system. Therefore, they have been mainstreamed in that every person standing for elections has to go to the minorities to ask for their votes now. Therefore, they feel more a part of the Pakistani culture and Pakistan society.

Then we have empowered also -- we have liberated the media and the press. If you see this press today sitting around here, and the media, previously there was only one Pakistan television. Today there are dozens of channels. All these people sitting around are the result of my democratization of Pakistan, opening the Pakistan society of the media -- the print media and the electronic media, both. And they're totally liberated.

And then, finally -- obviously, this is to do with freedom of speech and freedom of expression. And then finally is the issue of their having the right to work and elect their own people. And that is what we do. Today the senate, the national assembly, the provincial assemblies and the -- of the local government is there. And they've been voted through absolute -- franchise in a free and fair manner.

So, therefore, may I say that we have introduced the essence of democracy now in Pakistan. It has been done now. It never -- all these things never existed before. What maybe you are talking of is merely the label which probably you are inferring on to my uniform. Indeed, and without saying that you are inferring to it, yes, indeed, that is an issue which needs to be addressed. And I will follow constitutional norms. Even now I am following constitutional norms where I have been allowed to wear this uniform until 2007 -- being in uniform as the President of Pakistan. Beyond 2007, yes, indeed, this is an issue which has to be addressed and it has to be addressed according to the constitution of Pakistan. And I will never violate the constitution of Pakistan.

So let me assure you that democracy will prevail. Sustainable democracy has been introduced in Pakistan and will prevail in Pakistan, especially beyond 2007.

Long answer.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes -- important answer.

PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF: Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Very good job. Thank you again, sir.

END 1:18 P.M. (Local)

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060304-2.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT